

‘Pan-Inuit’ Written Heritage: Institutions, Goals, Projects, Perspectives

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Since time immemorial, cultures and societies have established processes to preserve their political, cultural and social memory. In ‘material’ societies, this led to the creation of institutions that became depositories of written heritage. The accumulation and preservation of written documents soon formed a vast and valuable source of information to understand the past and the present; in some cases, it also became the symbol of national pride and the mirror of a culture’s grandeur and influence (Campbell 2013). In nomadic societies, the process of memory safeguarding was mainly achieved through oral traditions, stories and tales; in some cases, small sculptures, jewelry and ceremonial clothing have been used to help preserve this memory. The shift from oral to written heritage, which began in the 19th century for most nomadic societies, left a part of this heritage lost (Arsenault et al. 2010), although ethnographers published part of it in written form and also collected different objects that were originally part of complex oral practices. This is why, today, ethnographic museums partly substitute the ‘national libraries’ of native cultures by

keeping trace of their cultural heritage. Since the last part of the 20th century, in a postcolonial context, most native cultures now try to set their own institutions, often based on adaptation of existing models (Smith 1999 and 2008), in order to save what can still be saved from memories and practices, considering that oral tradition is now almost everywhere marginalized.

In the circumpolar world, Inuit societies face a similar situation and share responsibility for the establishment, preservation and dissemination of Arctic heritage with the institutions of others, most often related to the 'southern governments' by which they are partly administered¹. In some places, such as Greenland, established institutions enable the development of this heritage with a vision beyond their single geographic area, while in others, such as Nunavik, cultural roles are scattered among several partners, which leaves many aspects of cultural protection and dissemination unaccounted for. This geographical and administrative segmentation of Inuit institutions leads to difficulty in establishing a 'pan-Inuit' vision for projects dealing with written heritage.

The objective of the present contribution is to reflect on the concept of heritage in the Inuit context, through focusing on the ongoing project to establish the first library/cultural centre in Nunavik, Québec. It is suggested that the imagining of a library in an Inuit community in the 21st century can also be a starting point for a broader analysis of issues of heritage at both circumpolar and regional levels.

Several questions can be raised from the case of Nunavik, which exceed this specific territory and even Inuit context. What are the boundaries of the heritage of a particular territory? Does the concept of 'pan-Inuit culture' have resonance for Inuit cultural actors, for example in Greenland where the concept arose? Is a pan-Inuit notion a competitor to the emergence of different local societies that seek to

develop their own 'national' institutions? What are the historical, administrative, and cultural links between the different Inuit territories? What is the role of institutions in the preservation, promotion and dissemination of heritage and culture – and how may this role be adapted to the specifics of an Inuit case? Which profit can be drawn by Nunavik from the experience and the development of Greenlandic cultural institutions? Is there a gap between heritage as defined by governments and the interests and needs of citizens? These are the very complex questions that animate the on-going reflection on Inuit heritage in Nunavik and of which the present contribution seeks to analyse some aspects.

To better understand the situation in Nunavik, it is beneficial to turn to Greenland, which is the pride of other Inuit societies, a country that built, over the past two centuries, a great number of cultural institutions for the preservation, knowledge and study of its heritage and that established different initiatives to support cultural creativity.

As part of an on-going research project², our Montréal-based group of researchers have conducted 21 interviews with people who run the Greenlandic institutions related to culture, education and the study of this country, and with key cultural actors, asking them to explain the history and the mandate of the institutions they lead, and insisting – in the perspective of better understanding the pan-Inuit paradigm – that they consider what connections they maintain (or would like to develop) with other Inuit societies. The results of these interviews³ provide insight into the development, challenges and benefits of the unique and complete Greenlandic cultural government intervention system, as well as the criticisms and challenges encountered in the development of greater links between Inuit societies, while

2 The project, of which I am the director, is called "Urgence : imaginer une bibliothèque/centre culturel pour le Nunavik" and is funded by the Fonds de recherche du Québec sur la société et la culture (2012-2016).

3 As part of the research project, these interviews were conducted in Nuuk by Stéphanie Vallières (whom I thank warmly) on my behalf during February 2013. Each interview has been typewritten and published as a report by *Imaginaire | Nord* in Montréal.

1 This, obviously, raises the question of *Who owns native culture?*, as Michael F. Brown puts it in his book (Brown 2003).

keeping an eye on possible solutions and advice for the establishment of future cultural institutions in Nunavik.

Negotiating Heritage

Heritage is defined in terms of history and identity, and in the way a community identifies itself. This identification can be multiple and parallel for a group or an individual. Thus, defining heritage must take into account a form of negotiation about its different roles in cultural life. Also, heritage is partly defined in terms of policies (laws, institutions, programs, grants) that may favour some links at the expense of others.

When looking at circumpolar heritages, and especially Inuit ones, we can consider at least four paradigms that each affect the definition of culture and heritage: these are labelled 'local', 'regional', 'pan-Inuit' and 'circumpolar'. Each of them implies its own certain scope for the definition of cultural heritage.

The 'local' paradigm refers to a specific territory. In the case of Inuit heritage, it refers to the heritage of Nunavik as a geographical unit, of Nunatsiavut, of Greenland etc. Each territory defines its own heritage in terms of its identity and its people. In the case of Greenland, the 'local' heritage is increasingly understood as a 'national' heritage, a territorial concept that aims to be inclusive for all its members.⁴ This ideological choice necessarily has an impact when it comes to defining a culture, a common history, the mandate of institutions, etc. In the case of Nunavik, 'local' heritage is more diffuse, since the very notion of 'Nunavik' as a region is newer than 'Greenland' and less integrated into the mandates of institutions. As trapper and politician Taamu-

si Qumag recalls in his autobiography, it was only in the 1970s that all communities in Northern Québec began to come together and develop their political and cultural identity as a whole, to be called Nunavik (Qumag 2010, 103–105).

The second paradigm, 'regional', combines the heritages of a larger whole, which for one specific region may contain multiple and even competing identities. This area defines a heritage that has certain regional boundaries, institutions and values. For example, Greenland's heritage is in interaction with a region that includes neighbouring societies (Iceland and the Faroe Islands), all of which form a whole justified by geography and a common colonial socio-economic history. Similarly, the historical and political context of Greenland explains bilateral ties with Denmark and multilateral agreements with other Nordic countries. In the case of Nunavik, the regional entity may refer to Québec, to Canada, or to all North American Indigenous cultures, three axes that compete in terms of identity and policies. Depending on the case, the heritage of Nunavik will, for example, exist within Québec's trilingual environment (Inuktitut, English and French), or within Canada in the context of wider multiculturalism, or within Aboriginal cultures in a postcolonial context.

The other two paradigms are more projects than reality, as illustrated in the interviews quoted below, but they deserve attention because they allow for the consideration of new perspectives, beyond the national aspects. The 'pan-Inuit' paradigm implies a relation to all Inuit societies, from Russia over Alaska and Canada to Greenland, imagining a whole that unites them in spite of their differences and their respective contributions. The idea behind a pan-Inuit perspective is a cultural reunification on the basis of what we may call 'Inuitness', rather than local or regional definitions. The pan-Inuit paradigm presupposes a shift of influence from the colonial powers of the South (Denmark, Canada, Québec, USA, Russia) in favour of horizontal relationships based on a common origin. The idea is powerful but it faces many obstacles. To accept a pan-Inuit paradigm would mean for Greenland to look away from Denmark, the Nordic countries and

⁴ This 'Greenlandic' inclusive definition of identity is challenged by an 'Inuit' ethnic definition of identity, supported by native claims. The debate in Greenland is not exclusive to this region, as illustrated by the debates in Nunavik.

Europe in favor of more sustained relationships with Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, Alaska, and away from the notion of a Greenlandic nation. The concept has been defended by Agqaluk Lynge and the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

Eleonara Jakobsen, responsible for cultural development in the town of Nuuk, expresses her thoughts on an Inuit perspective:

I haven't been to Canada yet, but I met a lot of people from Canada. I think they have the same feeling that I have, that I'm very grateful for meeting them because we came from the same people and we recognize a lot of things in each other. And it's amazing to see it, from people so far away, that we have something in common. It's a very strong feeling. [...] I'm proud of them and I think they are proud of us. So, in this way, we can give each other strength. It's like a mirror. [...] It gives us a stronger identity (Jakobsen 2013, 5).

Finally, a more recent paradigm is the 'circumpolar' one, which refers to all societies, cultures and heritages around the North Pole. In 2012, a conference in Berlin leaned on the notion of archives in an Arctic context⁵. Some intellectuals, like geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin, praised the cultural diversity of the area around the pole, comparing it to a polar 'Mediterranean', where different cultures share a context, location and common issues that define, at least in part, the boundaries of their local and regional heritage (Hamelin 2014).

It goes without saying that a given culture does not have to choose between these four paradigms. Each culture is actually influenced by all these perspectives and each region makes its own choice based on constraints, benefits and tensions resulting from the negotiation of its own heritage: should it be defined as more local (or national) than

regional, pan-inuit or circumpolar? Each choice has deep political and social impacts⁶.

The Nunavik cultural context

As early as the 1930s, a traveller to Nunavik recorded that most Inuit could read and write, despite the lack of a formal educational system. Written Inuktitut was then mainly used for religious ceremonies. The concept of 'written text' was introduced in Nunavik by Edmund James Peck (Evans 1984, 56-68) in 1877, yet(?) it was not until a few decades ago, at the end of the 20th century, that we saw the first signs of written Inuit literature. The establishment of a Western education system (1932 saw the first mission school; 1949 the first federal school; 1963 the School Board of New Quebec) has increased the knowledge of writing but primarily for the benefit of a foreign language: English. It was only after 1978 that Inuktitut was offered in schools (Vick-Westgate 2002).

During this transition period, written text had a symbolic place, linked to an external power (often religious) in a world that was previously based on orality. However, the appropriation of writing by the Inuit gradually led to the appearance of the first texts, scattered in newspapers and periodicals and in the form of books. These precious early texts mark the beginning of Inuit literary self-representation and, thus, a new way to preserve Inuit heritage. The first periodical that, in 1959, opened its pages to these productions, *Inuktitut Magazine*, signalled the beginning of an Inuit written literature in Nunavik. The first literary works written by Inuit – including *The Harpoon of the Hunter* from 1969, which has just been republished and which was the first Inuit novel in Canada – are a blend of forms that draw on both Inuit oral heritage and Western written literary tradition.

The retention rate of Inuit language is among the highest among In-

⁵ See <https://www.slawistik.lu-berlin.de/arcticarchives/program-pdft>, accessed 2 November 2012.

⁶ The complex co-existence of these heritages/identities is not a simple choice of either/or, but a matter of interplay and degrees of co-existence.

digenuous peoples of the Americas: 80% of Inuit in Nunavut and 90% in Nunavik speak Inuktitut (McDermott 2011, 225). That being said, and partly because of the difficulty of linguistic exchanges between Inuit, most Inuit writers in Canada choose English as the language of literary writing. A number of texts, though, are written and published in Inuktitut and, to a lesser extent, in French (the latter only in Nunavik).

Nunavik Inuit culture today seems in danger of extinction: according to Markoosie, author of *Harpoon of the Hunter*, "much of our oral history has been lost or is no longer told by those who possess such knowledge of our past" (Markoosie 2011, 37). The absence of a publisher or literary magazine in Nunavik and Nunavut and the fact that there is still no geographic centre for Inuit cultural and literary consecration, makes the development and maintaining of literary exchange difficult. The absence of any public library in Nunavik is also felt to be problematic. According to poetry and spoken-word artist Tagralik Partridge, this lack of a library has made her life more difficult: "I would have liked a library, because there was almost no books around me. Books would have given me a better grasp of the language that I would eventually write in" (Partridge 2013, 4).

The challenges and failings of the education system exacerbate this fragility. Even today, only a minority of Inuit complete their basic schooling, while a tiny fraction of them succeed in obtaining a graduate degree (Vick-Westgate 2002). The significant demand for skilled labour allows Inuit graduates to easily obtain a professional job, leaving few highly educated people to develop a platform for cultural and literary exchange'. Tagralik Partridge also mentions the effect of what she calls an 'intergenerational trauma' caused by the forced displacement of people to the hospitals and schools of the South, which made them lose part of their language and culture. For example, her father was taken away from his family when he was three; no news was given to his mother until he was back from the hospital at the age of eleven. He was then "an English-speaking person and he did not know how to hunt" (Partridge 2013, 5-6).

The need for a 21st century library/cultural centre in Nunavik

The urgent need to think of an original public library/cultural centre tailored to Nunavik became apparent during a cooperative project initiated in 2009, during International Polar Year, by Marianne Stenbæk and the author of this text, with the Inuit community, with a focus on the preservation and advancement of Nunavik's written heritage. This project resulted in the digitization of a great number of Inuit periodicals to the conclusion – by researchers, the national institutions and the communities – that the lack of public access to culture in the region was unacceptable.

There are many book depots in schools in Nunavik communities and a first municipal library project has been carried out in Inukjuak, but those depots and that project cannot adequately fulfil the role of ensuring universal access to knowledge, providing for the advancement of Inuit culture, conserving oral and documentary heritage, and fostering intercultural exchange (between Inuit populations, but also between Inuit and Québécois populations) for Nunavik as a whole.

Nunavik, which covers 660,000 square kilometres, is inhabited primarily by Inuit – recognized as a people by the National Assembly of Québec – who live in 14 coastal villages. All of these villages have a population of less than 1,000, except Kuujuaq, Puvirnituq and Inukjuak: Kuujuaq has a population of close to 3,000 and is home to most of the governing institutions, while Puvirnituq and Inukjuak are considered cultural centres. The population of Nunavik, which is slightly more than 11,000, is growing fast and is the youngest in Québec: half of the residents are under 25 years of age and three-quarters are under 35. This population explosion is accompanied by economic growth, supported by the Makivik Corporation, and by significant cultural activity. However, the development of infrastructures has not kept pace with the demographic growth and that is creating serious social and educational problems.

Ties between Nunavik and southern Québec are limited because of the absence of ground transportation links, the prohibitive cost of transportation and the lack of high-speed Internet. Historically, ties have been marked by a division between the cooperative movement (closer to Francophones and the Québec government) and political institutions (closer to Anglophones and the federal Canadian government). The Inuit learn Inuktitut in their first years of schooling and are then required to continue their education in French or English. If they want to go to college they usually have to leave Nunavik for a school in Montréal, to be taught in either French or in English.

In this context, it is important to reserve time to consider carefully what kind of cultural institution could mitigate the lack of cultural and social relations between the Inuit and the rest of Québec, and how it could be tailored to the geography, language and cultural context. It is also important to study similar experiences in Québec and in the Inuit region – including Greenland. Finally, it is important not to be limited by prior experience, but to learn from past successes and failures so as to imagine ideals for 21st century preservation, conservation, dissemination and access to knowledge and culture. This reflection gives rise to numerous questions:

- How to design, conceptually and physically, such an institution;
- How to take the trilingual context into account;
- How to take demographic growth in Nunavik into account;
- How to take into account the oral culture component;
- Which ties to establish with other Inuit regions (in Québec, Canada, Greenland, Russia and Alaska) and other parts of Québec;
- Which role digitization should be given as a means of accessing knowledge (in a region that does not have high-speed Internet access);
- How to promote ties among the Inuit, French and English communities.
- If this institution is to fulfil the role of a national library for the Nunavik region it must prepare an inventory of written, oral, audio-visual, electronic and documentary heritage (produced about

- Nunavik and by the people of Nunavik). Some of this inventory is actually located at different libraries, centres and institutions.
- What is the scope of this heritage, what additional research remains to be done to complete the inventory, how can recent works be added to it, where are those documents?
 - Which oral documents have been preserved? Where are they and in what condition are they?
 - What are the documentary holdings on Nunavik? Where are they? How extensive are they? We know that Avataq Cultural Institute has developed impressive conservation programs and that Makivik Corporation has substantial documentary heritage that it strives to preserve. What relations should be established between these institutions?
 - What might the audio-visual and electronic inventory on Nunavik be? How could it be established?
 - Such a cultural institution is also based on the self-perception that a territory has of itself and therefore is necessarily linked with the question of identity. Should it be mainly Inuit-based, local or national?

The following section considers how Nunavik compares with Greenland in defining its identity.

Competition between networks and a 'civic' definition of identity

During the Spring of 2011, a referendum on self-government in Nunavik ended unsuccessfully: the majority of the population of this Inuit territory, governed on an ethnic basis under the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement, refused the creation of regional democratic organizations, which would have paved the way for the autonomy of Nunavik.⁷ Among the arguments of the opponents to this re-

⁷ In the referendum, 2842 voted no (67%), 1400 voted yes (33%). (*Le Devoir* 2011).

form was the fear that the transition from an ethnic representation structure (based upon the Makivik Corporation, in which all members are Inuit) to a civic representation structure (where all residents of Nunavik would have a say) could mean a dilution of Inuit influence on the territory and a possible future minority status for the Inuit. Thus, citizens of Nunavik chose to maintain an ethnic structure, even if it meant giving up some form of autonomy. They chose to remain 'Inuit' rather than becoming 'citizens of Nunavik.'

In Greenland, a similar tension exists between the discourse of an 'Inuit' identity and a conception of identity imported from Europe, called 'national', which defines 'Greenlandic national identity' as the sum of all its citizens, regardless of their language and origin. This latest conception is in competition with the pan-Inuit paradigm, which assumes a link on the basis of a common origin and culture. Of course, all new national Greenlandic institutions have mandates in accordance with this national identity. For example, the objective of the Greenland National Museum is not to represent the Inuit culture as a whole: "It's all about Greenland", says Director Daniel Thørléifsen. This provides a semantic division between 'Inuit' (referring to the past) and 'Greenland' (referring to the present). The mandate of the museum is then "to tell the Greenlandic people, also the foreigners, of Greenland Inuit history and also Greenlandic contemporary history" (Thørléifsen 2013, 2). We can find this same vision of identity in the Greenland tourism policy, which is based on the idea of a "culturally shared platform called 'The Pioneering Nation.'" This idea is inspired by the North American conception of multiculturalism. According to Anders Stenbakken, director of the Visit Greenland agency: "We can say we are all pioneers here, from the very first Inuits who came to an empty country, say 1000 years ago, to the Vikings who came around year 1000 from Iceland, to the whalers, to the people who are attracted to Greenland today, to the tourists who want to go to a country like Greenland" (Stenbakken 2013, 8).

According to ethnographer Klaus Georg Hansen, who defines himself as a "Greenlander by nationality, but of course not by ethnicity"

(Hansen 2013, 9), the North American Inuit territories tend to maintain an ethnic conception of identity because many of them face large-scale immigration, which could drown their identity. This would not be the case of Greenland, which remains predominantly Inuit with only about 10% of its population being European.

At any rate, the debate on identity – civic or Inuit – has an impact on the conception of relations with foreign countries and on the decision to strengthen – or not – the links between the different Inuit societies.

Other conflicts are also apparent in relations between Greenland and the rest of the world: firstly, the former colonial relationships are not fully erased and Greenland still prioritizes, even in its cultural relations, links with Denmark. Aqaluk Lynge, former president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, admits that "through Denmark we have cooperation with the Nordic countries" (Lynge 2013, 3). More recently, new regional projects have also emerged, not in cooperation with other Inuit societies but with the immediate neighbours: Iceland and the Faroe Islands. This is the case in tourism (with the Vestnorden Travel Mart) and in heritage with the creation of a common platform between the three governments for the digitization of periodicals. A pan-Inuit paradigm therefore faces competition with other networks and affiliations, which Greenland, by history, by political choice or by geography, can promote at the expense of its pan-Inuit relations.

Greenland as a cultural leader

Changing Greenlandic governments have been aware of the leading role the nation can play in the circumpolar world, despite the differences between the various Inuit societies. As Elisa Jeremiassen, Chief Librarian of Nunatta Atuagataqarfia, the national and public library of Greenland, notes, not only is her country characterized by the number of its cultural institutions, but also by the level of its publications:

"I have been in Alaska, Canada, and in Siberia. I have been in Labrador. After I have been [there], I can see [that] in Greenland, we have many books and newspapers in our language" (Jeremiassen 2013, 2).

For Henriette Rasmussen, former Minister of Culture and now director of the national radio KNR, the effort is shared by all: "I think it is indeed expressed from all my people, that they find it very important and their duty to keep their culture and develop it" (Rasmussen 2013, 6). This effort is certainly focused on Greenland, but it was also here, in the 1980s, that a pan-Inuit idea of culture emerged that would eventually extend to other Inuit territories.

The rest of the Inuit world and part of the aboriginal world have their eyes turned to Greenland, which is seen as a model in the early development of cultural and heritage institutions and practices. The gap between the recent development of Greenland and other Inuit territories is significant. A review of what has been done in this country can help determine priorities in the cultural development of other areas, including our case: Nunavik.

If the Greenlandica national collection officially began only in the 1970s, a long history of publishing heritage can be traced back to the 18th century when the first Greenlandic-Latin dictionary was published. First translations of the Bible in Greenland and the publication of a Greenlandic version for children clearly demonstrate that the literacy of the population in Greenland not only outpaced other Inuit communities but also most western societies. Already in 1803, the Danes founded the first public lending library, the North Greenlandic Reading Society.

According to Klaus Georg Hansen, it must be recognized that this is due to the insistence of Protestant missionaries that converts master reading: "They had this rule: you have to be able to read the word of God yourself, otherwise, we can't baptise you. That was kind of lucky, depending on how you interpret it" (Hansen 2013, 2). This level of literacy enabled the development of the press, with the publication of

the *Aṭuagagalliutit* newspaper from 1861. Although controlled by the colonial power, it provided a platform for the exercise of strong public opinion; according to Aggaluk Lynge: "Once the free writing started, you couldn't censure nothing. So, it came as a very powerful tool" (Lynge 2013, 2).

The relative availability of books and publications in Greenlandic and Danish, a high literacy rate and the exercise of freedom of opinion gave the impetus to the creation of institutions and cultural practices inspired by their European and North American counterparts. Among these, we can include the National Museum of Greenland, founded in 1981 but with origins dating back to 1966, a National library as well as a public one, a university⁸ (founded in 1984) with its professional schools, and an association of authors with more than 60 members. In recent years, we note the opening in 1997 of the cultural centre *Katuag* which, with its 4,000 square metres, is the focal point of artistic creation in Greenland and key to accessing foreign culture. One must also mention the establishment of a National Theatre in 2011, based on a private company that has existed since 1984, itself stemming from a theatre school for Greenlanders in Denmark founded in 1975. In terms of publishing, although there is unfortunately no longer a public publisher, the private publishing house Milik pursues the goal to "give a voice to writers of Greenland" (Therkildsen 2013, 1). A media group employs a team of 30 people, including 12 journalists and four translators, to publish two weekly newspapers, one (*Aṭuagagalliutit*) founded in 1861 and the other (*Sermiisiat*) in 1958, in addition to local newspapers and a women's magazine. Of course, we must take into account also the important role of public television and radio stations broadcasting in Nuuk and throughout the country.

8 According to rector Time Pars, the university, which initially had 11 students in the social sciences, now has more than 500 students. Professional schools of journalism, education and nursing were added to the first institute. The university employs approximately 120 people, including 80 teachers. (Pars 2013: 2)

Several of these institutional practices are exemplary in terms of cultural heritage dissemination and preservation. Three among many can be mentioned: the mandatory deposit of 15-year-old archives by public organisations at the National Archives; the program for systematic distribution of Greenlandic publications through the public library to regional institutions; and remote access to documentation and archives assured by the National Library to users of all communities in Greenland.

The success of the *Katuag* cultural centre is exceptional. Juaka Lyberth, who participated in the founding of this centre, recalls the initial opposition to the project:

There was a lot of discussion among the population in Greenland because it was a lot of money to use for the cultural centre. Many were against this building because they said: "We would rather have some houses in Greenland", more houses, maybe an efficient social and health care, health centres, and others wanted to have a swimming pool, a swimming centre, so there were many different kinds of wishes, instead of a cultural centre. But the politicians kept their decision to build a cultural centre, and I think it was the right decision because after *Katuag* was opened and people saw what they can use it for, everyone said: "What did we do before *Katuag* was built?" There was no cultural centre at all in Greenland before *Katuag*, where people could meet together for concerts, for theatre, for art exhibitions, for movies, for a lot of things, for cultural activities (Lyberth 2013, 2).

The architecture of the building was entrusted to the Danish firm Schmidt, Hammer & Lassen and is inspired by the representation of culture and Greenlandic nature. Lyberth believes that the form of the building has contributed to its success: "In this building, you have this

northern vibe, just like the northern lights [for the ceiling and the outside wall] but it's also just like the iceberg and at the same time, it's just like it's a piano" (Lyberth 2013, 2). Today, performing at *Katuag* centre is seen by artists across the country as a form of recognition. The building has played a role in the democratization, consecration and institutionalization of culture. Funded (in 2008) by public funds of 9 million DKK, the centre also generates its own income and seeks additional funding for its activities, which allows it to have an annual budget of about 28 million DKK. During its first year, *Katuag* received 100,000 visitors (in a town of about 18,000 people). According to Lyberth, its managers wanted to open the centre to society, to meet the needs of all audiences (young people, families, the elderly), presenting all kinds (amateur and professional) forms of art, and creating partnerships with other cultural institutions – all of which made it a success: "We made this house to be a cultural centre for all, the whole community, so I think this is the reason for the success of this house, already from the beginning" (Lyberth 2013, 2).

The reality of heritage in Greenland

Despite the existence of cultural institutions and support programs that propose their own definitions of culture and heritage, these are also defined by readers and citizens. Between ideal and reality, there is sometimes a gap that allows us to re-think the basis of cultural institutions.

In Greenland, despite a clear desire to develop a contemporary, future-oriented culture, evidence shows a sustained interest in the past. At the University Library in Nuuk, as at the National Archives of Greenland, the most frequent individual requests are for genealogy and family history. Similarly, the works of contemporary artists often refer to the myths of the past. According to Daniel Thorleifsen, the National Museum of Greenland, "some of the painters learn modern [techniques], but in some way, they are always... you can always see

inspiration from old myths and tales and you can see that they are inspired by the past" (Thorleifsen 2013, 3). Publishers and booksellers draw a similar conclusion: it is not contemporary fiction that interests the reading public the most, but biographies and stories about local history. Henriette Rasmussen remembers that this tension was felt at the Atuakiorfik publishing house: "We would like fiction much more than biography, but [...] people find their history very important, the memories of the traditional knowledge, traditions, their own histories" (Rasmussen 2013, 3).

Claus Jørdening from the Atuagkat bookshop feels a shift towards world culture despite the actions taken to favour Greenlandic culture. He says: "We're getting everything new, everything. [...] That's our mission. But then again, to survive, I have to sell what people would like" (Jørdening 2013, 4). The proportion of Greenlandic books seems to decrease to the benefit of Greenlandic-Danish bilingual books or even Danish-only books. Claus Jørdening testifies as follows: "When I bought the bookshop, I would say in 2005, it was a ratio of one to six or seven: one Greenlandic book for six or seven Danish books I sold. Today, it's one to 10 or one to 12. [...] Many young people don't buy any books" (Jørdening 2013, 1). At the Public Library, Elisa Jeremiassen feels the same trend: "So what do teenagers read? Danish books? Danish books, yes" (Jeremiassen 2013, 5). If policies can define culture and heritage, it is also worthwhile to observe the actual use of culture and heritage: there is sometimes a gap between what is desired by elites and by the broader public. Both groups seek to establish relations of culture and heritage.

A pan-Inuit vision

What we refer to as the pan-Inuit paradigm is a way of perceiving the Inuit in a circumpolar perspective, considering what is common to all Inuit from Alaska to Greenland, while taking into account their differences. This paradigm has a project: to favour the links between the

territories where Inuit live and mitigate colonial or post-colonial links with the southern powers that have administered them through centuries, defending the premise that all Inuit, no matter where they live, form a people.

This pan-Inuit vision originated in Greenland and was carried by intellectuals, including the poet and politician Agqaluk Lynge. The first meetings that lead to the creation of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1977 gave an organized form to pan-Inuit claims, at least in official and political spheres. Lynge, in his presentation of ICC published in 1993, suggests that the reunion of all Inuit should be seen as a recovery of history: "Inuit Circumpolar Conference", he wrote, "is part of the natural history of the Inuit people and of the land we (as Inuit) have occupied for centuries" (Lynge 1993, 8). For him, Inuit all around the world form one people, despite any political divisions: "My people live across the vast Arctic region that crosses the political boundaries of Canada, Russia, Alaska and Greenland. Inuit are one people: we speak the same language, eat the same whale *muk-tag* and subsist on the same Arctic Ocean" (Lynge 2014, 16).

In addition to politics and diplomacy, which are important for this organization, it is the perspectives of society, culture and heritage that are proposed to link the different Inuit regions. Lynge specifically mentions the protection of cultural heritage, the establishment of a common writing system and setting up an Arctic news system (Lynge 1993, 110). Beyond these projects, the pan-Inuit vision advances the idea that one must consider the Inuit people as a whole when it comes to cultural activities and to the definition of heritage in the Arctic. However, this pan-Inuit vision, proposed to supersede local and national interests, is still rather marginal and seldom practiced by the institutions involved in culture and heritage, except of course by the ICC itself.

Barriers to a pan-Inuit paradigm

Obstacles to the development of a pan-Inuit vision are numerous,

even for the Inuit Circumpolar Council, long headed by Aqqaq Luk Lyngge. The latter notes two major problems: the differences between cultural support in Greenland compared to other Inuit societies make it difficult to develop joint projects. Also, international organizations in which the ICC is participating are not directly concerned with cultural issues. In both cases, it is a barrier to further cooperation among Inuit societies.

Other reasons can explain the weakness of the links: transportation and language. As Anders Stenbakken from Visit Greenland mentions, "accessibility is of course a huge issue for Greenland" (Stenbakken 2013, 3). Most of the routes in Alaska, Nunavut, Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Greenland follow a North-South⁹ axis in relation to the states with which they have links. It is much easier to go from Quebec to Kuujuaq, than from Kuujuaq to Nain; it is easier to fly from Alaska to continental United States than from Alaska to Nunavut. The problem is not mainly that the distances are great, it is the lack (or excessive price) of east-west air links (which is the direction of the geographical distribution of the Inuit world). Thus, air routes more often follow ex-colonial links rather than east-west links between Inuit communities.

Another difficulty is related to the absence of a common writing system, which may result in minimal understanding of dialects used in different territories. Of course, this is a delicate issue, since Nunavik and part of Nunavut want to keep the syllabic system, which is not only a part of their history but also of their identity. Language, as well as transport, make pan-Inuit cooperation difficult.

In some fields, there is a lack of interest in working for the establishing of a pan-Inuit context. From a tourism point of view, for example, a pan-Inuit unity does not make sense. Anders Stenbakken explains that the tourists who go to Iqaluit do not necessarily want to replicate

the same experience in Nuuk. According to him, if a greater relationship between Inuit societies is desirable from a political and cultural perspective, they do not have a future in commercial tourism (Stenbakken 2013, 9). This view is shared by Claus Jørdening who finds that customers in his bookshop are not very interested in buying books from Nunavut and elsewhere, since their interest is local (Jørdening 2013, 6).

In contrast, artists from the National Theatre of Greenland would like to develop relationships with other Inuit societies but they face a different kind of obstacle: the lack of support programs. Existing programs all encourage them to work instead with the Nordic countries, Denmark primarily. According to Sverre Syrin: "That has been our aim, for many years, to get contact westwards, because to Europe and Scandinavia, it's no problem and it's full of money, but we want to get westwards, because that is where the Inuits are. They don't live in Scandinavia". Makka Kleist supports Syrin's analysis: "It is so frustrating because all the money lies in, if we want to have a collaboration with Scandinavians or Europeans. We can get a lot of money, but not to the other Inuit" (Kleist and Syrin 2013, 6).

Pan-inuit projects and initiatives

When Greenland turns to the rest of the Inuit world, it is in most cases for official relations or for the development of yet-to-come projects. Daniel Thørléfsen remembers having Inuit visitors from abroad: "It is more official guests and not the common people, but more of officials, politicians, which have been visiting government" (Thørléfsen 2013, 2). Interest yet exists. According to the director of the journalism program at the University of Greenland, Naja Paulsen, despite the costs, students should be able to interact with other Inuit cultures. Until now, she said, "it has been one way: it's been Denmark and Greenland for many years, now we have to open our eyes to the others. Make connections" (Paulsen 2013, 2). For now, Poul Krarup, editor of the *Sermitsiaq* and AG newspapers, admits that only very limited news are published about other Inuit societies, yet he dreams

⁹ Despite a recent seasonal flight from Nuuk to Iqaluit, jointly operated by First Air (Nunavut) and Air Greenland, and seen as a 'pan-Inuit' initiative. This route has been discontinued since then.

of a circumpolar newsroom where each region would provide information to others.¹⁰

On a small scale, initiatives exist. People at the Greenlandic radio know that they sometimes have listeners from Labrador; the opening of an east-west air route between Nuuk and Iqaluit enabled, for a few years, faster links for those who could afford to pay the rates. The National Library of Greenland, even if it is not its mandate, sometimes buys books from other Inuit territories. According to Charlotte Andersen, "it's not our mission, but we do buy books about the Arctic area, so we do have books from Russia and of course Canada. [...] We buy a little, once in a while" (Andersen 2013, 4-5).

The small scale of these initiatives shows well enough that the pan-Inuit vision, even if it would open a new perspective in the circumpolar world, faces many obstacles. Artists Lis Stender and Peter Jensen, from Inuk Media and Inuk Design, pretty much summed up this issue when describing the relationship – predominantly symbolic – that they have with other Inuit:

Jensen: You asked about how we feel about other Inuits. Mostly, we don't think daily about the other Inuits, but we know they are there. [...] We heard about them, but when we see another Inuit, despite they talk – they have a different language – we can see something...

Stender: Similar...

Jensen: ...Similar between us, because there is something with their eyes, most of them, the eyes.

Stender: I think it's the look, the soul (Stender and Jensen 2013, 8-9).

Even if institutions do not always include as a priority in their man-

dates the creation of links with other Inuit societies, several other pan-Inuit projects exist, through international organizations, but also through some media, including radio and the Internet. Aqaluk Lynge says that the ICC defends two main projects in the cultural field. The first one is linguistic and aims at "dialogue on the writing systems [that] will help us to see if we can do something together" (Lynge 2013, 6). The second is to establish a network of radio and television to share content between all Inuit societies. Such long-term projects will require a circumpolar political will.

Lis Stender from Nuuk and Taqralik Partridge from Kuujuaq both participated as artists in events that brought together Inuit across the Arctic. They consider that they greatly benefited from these, and they felt a new sense of solidarity across political boundaries. Taqralik Partridge said that her meeting with Greenlandic artists allowed her to realize that they share almost the same experiences and are all part of the same community (Partridge 2013, 12). However, these cultural events are rare and expensive to organize.

Radio and the internet offer more flexible exchange opportunities. Henriette Rasmussen remembers that KNR Radio had contacts with communities in Nunavut and Nunavik through interviews on the radio. She even hosted what are probably the first pan-Inuit radio broadcasts in the late 1970s, called *From our Relatives*. Today, a program called *Broadcast in Other Languages* occasionally airs content from other Inuit territories (Rasmussen 2013, 4-5). Rasmussen says she would like to multiply these initiatives, and if possible on a permanent basis, with other radio stations in the Inuit world. Also, the arrival of the Internet enables content sharing – for archives and news – in an easier way than before. Internet also helps to develop new virtual communities among Inuit living in different territories: again, Taqralik Partridge mentioned websites that bring together Inuit from everywhere – especially in Alaska, in her case, for linguistic reasons – who can exchange cultural experiences (Partridge 2013, 11).

¹⁰ Since the interview, such a circumpolar newsroom, *The Arctic Journal*, was established by AG: <http://arcticjournal.com/>.

Conclusion

Greenland, by its history, the quality of its institutions and its support to cultural activities has been, and continues to be, a model of heritage and cultural development for other Inuit societies, despite the difficulty to fully develop the complex array of different visions on Greenland and the Inuit people (as indigenous, national, regional, mono- bi- and multi-lingual entity). The pan-Inuit vision of cultural identity also faces challenges that are not all compatible with the development of a national, inclusive identity.

Establishing a first library/cultural centre in Nunavik may seem like a complex endeavour. How do you conceive of such an institution in a trilingual region, with a fast-growing population, which is undergoing radical change and quickly losing oral cultural references – in an era of digitized knowledge (when the region does not have high-speed Internet)? Greenland faces the very same barriers, and this is why it constitutes a relevant comparative, inspirational case.

Such an institution is an urgent need for Nunavik, and models in Greenland offer hope that it can be achieved, possibly with a pan-Inuit mandate that could reach over borders to build cultural links between all Inuit societies.

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